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*The imminent Danger, and the only sure Resource of
this Nation:*

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNETH,
LOMBARD STREET,

On FRIDAY the 28th of FEBRUARY 1794,

The Day appointed for a General Fast.

By JOHN NEWTON, RECTOR.

*Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us;
He hath smitten, and he will bind us up.* Hosea vi. 1.

In publico discrimine, omnis honor Miles est.

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A

SERMON, &c.

JONAH iii. 9.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

HOW great is the power of God, over the hearts of man! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were heathens. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet till Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his prediction, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in a time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow, within forty days. But it is said, *they believed God* *. The awful denunciation, made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation, of business and of pleasure, took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigour of which was extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy. Though they had no encouragement but a peradventure, who can tell if God

* Ver. 5.

will turn and repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not?

It appears from this, and other passages of scripture, that the most express declarations of God's displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance. Thus in the prophecy of Ezekiel, when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die *; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. And, again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah †, at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. The Lord God speaks to us by his word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot repent ‡, he is of one mind, who can turn him? Yet when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgment of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation, repentance and prayer, he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them, the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence, which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear, that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment § against us, and condemn us, if we do not imitate their example, and humble ourselves before God? They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and immediately,

* Ezekiel xxxiii. 14, 15.

† Jeremiah xviii. 17, 18.

‡ Numb. xxiii. 19, Job. xxiii. 13, § Matt. xii. 41.

on their first hearing him: and they sought for mercy upon a peradventure, when they could say no more, than, Who can tell, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet has so solemnly declared?

God does not speak to us, by the audible voice of an inspired prophet, nor is it necessary. We know, or may know from his written word, that, it shall be well with the righteous *, and ill with the wicked. The appearance of an angel from Heaven, could add nothing to the *certainty* of the declarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a succession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the Scripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequences, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the event, if we humbly confess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way which he has prescribed. The Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, is preached unto us. Jesus Christ as crucified † is set forth amongst us. His blood cleanseth from all sin; and they who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified. They have also free access to a throne of grace, and like Israel they have power ‡, by prayer, to prevail with God and with man. And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we § repented not? May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his Providence. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and it behoves us to learn righteousness ||. His hand is lifted up,

* Isa. iii. 10, 11. † Gal. iii. 1. † John i. 7. Rom. viii. 1.
Acts xiii. 39. ‡ Gen. xxxii. 28. § Rev. iii. 21.

|| Isa. xxvi. 9, 11.

and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet, sooner or later, they *must*, they *shall* see. The great God has a controversy with the potsherds of the earth. The point to be decided between him, and many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home, is, whether he be the governor of the earth, or not? His own people, to whom his name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concerns in subordination to this. If there be no other alternative, misery and havock must spread, men must perish by millions, yea the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonoured and defied with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own cause, and either in a way of judgment or of mercy all men shall know that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the old testament so frequently repeated as this, *Ye, or they shall know that I am the Lord!* Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good *?

The rivers of human blood, and all the calamities and horrors which overspread a great part of the Continent, the distant report of which, is sufficient to make our ears tingle; are all to be ascribed to this cause. God is not acknowledged, yea, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore men are left to themselves, their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the way of their own hearts. A more dreadful judgment than this, cannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

And though *we* are still favoured with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems moving our way, and we have reason to fear it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should

* Ezekiel passim.

think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord's gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him; and who know it is equally easy to him, either to save, or to destroy, by many or by * few. Our fleets and armies may be well appointed, and well commanded; but without his blessing upon our councils and enterprizes, they will be unable to defend us. He can take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissension. And by his mighty wind, he can dash our ships to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them as lead in the mighty waters. Who is he that † faith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth not?

Our Lord and Saviour, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, Think ye that these men were sinners, above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you ‡, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts! It will not become us to say, either to God or man, that we have indeed sinned, but there are greater sinners than ourselves. It is true the French Convention, and many others who are infatuated by the same spirit, have exceeded the ordinary standard of human impiety and cruelty. But I hope there are multitudes in that nation, who though they are overawed by their oppressors, and dare not speak their sentiments, yet are mourning in secrecy and silence for the abominations, which they cannot prevent. But the French have not sinned against such advantages as we possess.

* 1 Sam. xiv. 6.

† Lam. iii. 37.

‡ Luke xiii. 4.

They were long the slaves of arbitrary power, and the dupes of superstition; and of late they have been the dupes of madmen assuming the name of philosophers. We, on the contrary, were born and educated in a land, distinguished from all the nations of the earth, by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of gospel truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins; and no just comparison, in this respect, can be formed between us, and other nations, until we can find a people, who have been equally favoured, and for an equal space of time, by the providence of God, and have likewise equalled us, in disobedience and ingratitude.

The most dreadful enormities committed in France, are no more than specimens of what human depravity is capable, when circumstances admit of its full exertion, and when the usual boundaries and restrictions, necessary to the peace and welfare of civil society, are judicially removed. The influence of daring infidelity and profligate example, aided by the peculiar state of their public affairs, have broken, in many instances, the strongest ties of social and relative life, and extinguished the common feelings of humanity.

Yet the unhappy French, though our inveterate enemies, are not the proper objects of our hatred, or our scorn; but rather of our pity. They know not what they do. Let us pray for them. Who can tell, but God, to whom all things are possible, and whose mercies are higher than the heavens, may give *them also* repentance? And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be instructed and warned by their history; for by nature, we are no better than they.

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meet-
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ing

ing to-day, is to humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved; and imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty by sea and land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself, and to his kingdoms *. I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—oh! for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described †! Oh! that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence, and the attitude of his attendant angels! They cover their faces, and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of his majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render him the whole of that praise and homage, which are justly due to him. Oh, that by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory! If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely, each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the gospel prevented us from crying out, Wo is me, I am undone!—We should at least say (the Hebrew word might be so rendered) I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a peo-

* Title page of the appointed form of Prayer.

† Isa. vi.

ple of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to perplex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin, contrasted with the holiness, and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear, to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first, look at home, *I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner.* This confession suits us all; and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighbouring hills, usually sees it obscured by a cloud of smoke. This cloud is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. It is no unfit emblem of the sin, and the misery, which abound in this great metropolis. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, Their iniquity is not * yet full: I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though by grace delivered from the reigning power † of sin, are still sinners. In many things we offend all in thought, word, and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light, and experience—for those personal sins, the record of which is only known to God and our consciences—for the defects and defilements of our best services—for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands,

* Gen. xv. 16.

† Rom. vi. 14.

wives, masters or servants, and as members of the community. Our dulness in the ways of God, our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our indifference to what concerns his glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions, when our own temporal interests are affected; are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that if he was to enter into judgment *with them only*, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them; if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity *, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins, can be competent judges of what the prophet meant, or felt, when he said, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. *We ought to be* no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell, than for our own. *We shall be* so, if with the eyes of our mind we behold the King, the Lord of hosts. Because his glory, which should be the dearest object to our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think, this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament; both with respect of his goodness to us, and our perverse returns to him. He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to shew amongst us, such instances of his protection, his favour, his grace, and his patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation.

* Pf. cxxx. 3, 4.

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour, was first known in this island; it was probably at an early period of the Christian æra. But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance, which covered Christendom for many ages; the dawn of returning gospel light, was first seen *amongst us*. From the time of Wickliff, the morning-star of the Reformation, the true gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times, when they who loved this gospel, have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful, in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light, but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree, till of late, unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars, which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies, and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our intestine broils at different times, have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation, and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide spreading and flourishing commerce, has raised us to a pitch of opulence, which excites the admiration and envy of other nations. Great Britain and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map, but our interests and influence, extend, in every direction, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel, apply with equal propriety to us? What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done?

Wherefore

Wherefore * when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ?

How is the blessed gospel improved among us ? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe, and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number : and for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt ; and both they who preach and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known.

Wisdom is indeed justified by all her children †. The gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe. It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery, guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in † the world. But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many, who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they knew not. Alas ! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversation, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace !

* Isa. v. 4.

† Titus ii. 12,

† Luke vii. 35. Rom. i. 16.

What then must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers, that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's sabbaths and worship, abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated, in every rank of life. In a day, when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping * and mourning; thoughtless security, dissipation and riot, are the characteristics of our national spirit. The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination, so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God; are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf.

I should be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unhappy business, if upon this occasion, I should omit to mention, the African slave trade. I do not rank this amongst our national sins; because I hope and believe, a very great majority of the nation, earnestly long for its suppression. But, hitherto, petty and partial interests, prevail against the voice of justice, humanity, and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practised in France; you would perhaps be shocked much more, if you could fully conceive of the evils and miseries, inseparable from this traffic; which I apprehend, not from hearsay, but from my own ob-

* Isa. xxii. 13.

servation,

servation, are equal in atrocity, and perhaps superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any or all the worst actions which have been known in France, since the commencement of their revolution. There is a cry of blood against us; a cry accumulated by the accession of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year.

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation, in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him!

II. Have we not therefore cause to say, with the Ninevites, who can tell?—Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility, that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations; and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed. If we have not only transgressed the *laws* of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of *his forgiveness*, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves. If all the day long he has stretched out * his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people—and, hitherto, almost in vain.—If neither the tokens of his displeasure nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds, who can tell if he will yet be intreated? May we not fear, lest he should say, My Spirit shall strive with them no more. They are joined to their idols, let them

* Rom. x. 21.

alone.

alone*. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face from you, when you make many prayers, I will not hear!

Where are now the mighty empires, which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain tops. Nothing of them remains but their names. They perished, and their † memorials have almost perished with them. The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes, for which he raised them up, were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed, like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, Shall not I visit for these things ‡? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece, and in the Lesser Asia? When the Apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited his epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them, were applicable to professors of the gospel in our land, I fear, we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our faith and love are every where spoken of §, and that we are examples to all that believe? That our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known, and the last to be more than the first? Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny Him ||?—That

* Hosea iv. 17. Isa. i. 15. † Ps. ix. 6. ‡ Jer. v. 9.
§ Rom. i. 8. 1 Theff. i. 7. Rev. ii. 19. || Titus i. 16.
Rev. iii. 1. 15. Rev. ii. 4.

they are neither hot nor cold—That they have a name to live and are dead—That they have, at least, forgotten their first love? When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them, but instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions which once rejoiced in the light of the gospel, have been long overspread with Mahomeddan darkness; and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord*, the temple of the Lord are we, if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the † ark of his glory, into the hands of their enemies; to teach them, and to teach us, that formal hypocritical worshippers, have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell?—Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our foreign enemies; we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat ‡, and kicked. Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves. And that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those

* Jer. vii. 4. † 1 Sam. iv. 5. 11. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 15.

who having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain, in a time of disturbance and confusion; but they are abetted, and instigated, by persons of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it, as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no union can long subsist.

“ Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, “ with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for “ the abundance of all things * ; therefore shalt “ thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord shall “ send against thee, in hunger and in thirst and in “ nakedness, and in the want of all things.” These words of Moses to rebellious Israel, emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives, to a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts ! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities !

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments ; let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful God ! Who can tell but he may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not. If the professed business of this day, be not confined to a day, but, if by his blessing, it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then *I* am warranted to tell you, from his word, that there is yet hope. You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect

* Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth; take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the * trees when agitated by a storm; but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength †, your resting place, and your hiding place; under the shadow of his wings you shall be safe.

1. He who loved you, and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven, and in earth ‡ is committed unto him. The Lord reigneth let the earth be never so unquiet. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great designs; and the remainder of that wrath, all their projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain. In vain they rage and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than he permits them. If they attempt it, he has a hook and a bridle in their mouths §. When the enemies would come in like a flood, he can lift up a standard against them. As he has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed; so, with equal ease, he can still the madness of the people.

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know him not. But if you make Him your fear and your dread, He || will be a sanctuary

* Isa. vii. 2.

† Ps. xlv. 1.—xc. 1.—cxix. 114.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 18. Ps. xcix. 1. Ps. lxxvi. 10.

§ 2 Kings xix. 28. Isa. lix. 19. Job xxxviii. 10, 11. Ps. lxxv. 7.

|| Isa. viii. 13, 14. Ps. xlv. 2.

to *you*, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.

2. Your part and mine, is to watch and pray. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may be found waiting *, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning, that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for his church, which is dear to him, as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his gospel, and the extension of his kingdom, till his great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun †, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled; and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light will undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our beloved king, and his family, upon the counsels of government, and parliament, and upon all subordinate authority in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence ‡. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret, mark of divine protection. The Lord will be our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered. Or if for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace, He should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon Him to afford us strength according to our day. He is always near to his people, a very

* Mark xiii. 35.—xiv. 38.

† Mal. i. 11.

‡ Ezek. ix. 4. Matt. x. 30. Deut. xxxiii. 25. 2 Cor. i. 5.
present

present help in the time of trouble; and He can make the season of their greatest tribulations, the season of their sweetest consolations.

3. And let us pray in faith. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an ax, or a saw, in the hand of God*. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple, and prayed; and the Assyrian army melted away like snow. When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened, while the church was united in earnest prayer, for his deliverance†.

And as we have heard, so have we seen. God has signally answered the prayers of his people, in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved King, during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When he thus removed our apprehensions, we were like them that dream‡!

I believe prayer was no less efficacious, towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of danger at that time, as chimerical, because the Lord was pleased to avert it. But, I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the persons we daily met with in the street, the many daring cabals which were held

* Isa. x. 15. Isa. xxxvii. 14—36.

† Acts xii. 5—13.

‡ Ps. cxxvi. 1.

in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters, upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the hearts of men, were turned like the tide, in the critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident! Then we had a repeated proof that he hears and answers prayer!

The present likewise is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us, as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our enemies are inveterate, and enraged. Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite in supplications for mercy, who can tell, but he may be intreated to give us that help, which it would be in vain to expect from man? Yea, we have encouragement to hope, that *he will be for us* *, and then none can prevail against us. But without his blessing, our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings, cannot succeed.

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament, not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls, who are yearly precipitated by it, into an eternal, unchangeable state—You, I trust, will shew yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows; and by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom †, it would have escaped destruction.

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly, who are little concerned for their own sins, and

* Rom. viii. 31.

† Gen. xviii. 32.

are,

are, of course, incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it.—Or if it please God to prolong our tranquillity, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the possession of those principles, which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? Or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once *were* as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you *may be*, as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, Him that cometh to me, I will *in no wise* cast out*. He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone, you can come rightly to him. If you ask it of him, He will give it you; if you seek it, in the means of his appointment, you shall assuredly find. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. If you are not saved, by faith in his blood, you are lost for ever. Oh! kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled, yea but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!

* John vi. 37. Matt. vii. 7. † Heb. x. 26, 27. Ps. ii. 12.



